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C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 000638

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [NG](#)

SUBJECT: NIGER: POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE CASE AGAINST
THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER

REF: A. (A) NIAMEY 632 (B) NIAMEY 624 (C) NIAMEY 607
(NOTAL)

[1](#)B. (D) 07 NIAMEY 1412 (E) 06 NIAMEY 1122

Classified By: Donald W. Koran, DCM, reasons 1.4 (b/d)

[1](#)1. (C) The arrest of former Prime Minister Hama Amadou on corruption charges (refs A-C) raises questions about Amadou's guilt and the motivations behind his prosecution. We are not in a position to answer those questions definitively, but we offer the following observations.

[1](#)2. (C) Amadou (he is usually referred to in Niger as Hama) has probably engaged in corrupt practices in his long government career. Originally a customs officer, Amadou has held a series of increasingly important government jobs, culminating in the Prime Ministership. These jobs provided abundant opportunity for illicit personal enrichment. It would be surprising if Amadou never availed himself to those opportunities. His alleged implication in the Education Ministry embezzlement case was the grounds for his removal as Prime Minister a year ago. Amadou has not been charged in connection with that case, but two former education ministers are awaiting trial on charges related to it (ref E). Amadou's lifestyle appears out of line with the salaries he's earned in government.

[1](#)3. (C) It is less clear that Amadou is guilty of the crime for which he was arrested and charged, the misuse of almost CFA 100 million (about \$240,000). The case seems strange for a number of reasons: it involves a relatively small amount of money over six years ago; it involves ambiguous and complex issues related to GON appropriations law; and Amadou is not charged with stealing the money for his own use, but rather using funds appropriated for one thing (supporting the private press) for another (running a public relations campaign abroad).

[1](#)4. (C) Whatever the validity of the charges against Amadou, it is likely that he was charged in part to prevent him from running for president in elections scheduled for late next year. Amadou was the front runner before he was dismissed as Prime Minister last year, and was still considered one of the leading candidates up until his arrest. He is the President of the ruling MNSD party and has been actively seeking the party's presidential nomination.

[1](#)5. (C) President Tandja has been working equally hard to wrestle control of the MNSD party from Amadou. Under the Nigerien constitution, he cannot be re-elected again. Moreover, the clause of the constitution setting the two term limit cannot be amended. Nevertheless, there is widespread speculation that Tandja seeks to remain in office after his current term ends next year. Even if he does not seek to remain in office, it is no secret that he does not want to see Amadou replace him. This provides ample motive to

prosecute Amadou. It would likely be years before any trial would be held and verdict rendered in the case, but Amadou's residence in a maximum security prison pending trial would seem to doom his presidential aspirations for the immediate future.

¶6. (C) Tandja would not lack for allies in sidelining Amadou, including pro-Tandja MNSD members and other political parties. Three likely candidates in the next Presidential election, National Assembly President and CDS party chief Mahamane Ousmane, National Assembly opposition coalition head Mahamadou Issoufo, and current Prime Minister Seini Oumarou would benefit from Amadou's removal from the political scene.

¶7. (C) Comment: Looked at in a positive light, Amadou's arrest shows that government officials at the highest level are being held accountable for alleged corruption. The arrest of a number of prominent officials, including the two former education ministers and the mayor of Niamey (ref E), sends a strong message, although the message would be even stronger if the men were actually tried. A less favorable interpretation of Amadou's arrest is that it was motivated by a desire to prevent him from running for President next year.

ALLEN